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Book Reviews

A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. Edited by JAMES HASTINGS, D.D., with the assistance of JOHN A. SELBIE, D.D., and (in the reading of the proofs) of JOHN C. LAMBERT, D.D. Volume II. *Labour-Zion*, with Appendix and Indexes. New York: Scribners; Edinburgh: Clark, 1908. Pp. xiv+912. \$6.

One should observe that this is a dictionary of Christ *and* the gospels, not a dictionary of Christ *in* the gospels. Then one will be prepared to find Christ approached from every conceivable standpoint: that of Paul, that of other New Testament writers, that of Christian theologians of all ages, that of history as affected by him since his time, and from many other angles. There is the angle of the historian, and the angle of the theologian, and the angle of the philosopher. And within each of these there is the conservative tendency struggling with the progressive. What wonder if the picture is blurred! And no one to write on "Jesus" or on "Christ"! Why not? Is it the hopelessness of the task, the futility of attempting to delineate a clear-cut, consistent, and convincing character from the congeries of opinions, deductions, and speculations? A dictionary on the Bible must be planned for a large and varied audience, large to assure financial success, varied to meet divergent interpretations. To leave to each the task of constructing the Christ of his inheritance or his desire from the elements presented that are suitable to his conception may be the part of wisdom, if not of necessity.

There is a wealth of material of the very highest value and easy accessibility, now in this, now in that, article in this admirable volume. Every serious student of the gospels will wish to have access at all times to the treasures of learning brought together here in compact form. He will have the opportunity to make choice. If he does not like the position of the President of Toronto University on the Lord's Supper, there is for him an alternative presented by the Pusey Librarian at Oxford. If Professor Nestle's treatment of the Lord's Prayer seems technical at the expense of edification, he can turn to that by one of the sub-editors. If he is displeased with the interpretation of the death of Christ given under the word "Sacrifice," he may find satisfaction in the rigor of the thought developed under "Propitiation." If the documentary theory of the relation of the Synoptic Gospels, as advanced in Mr. W. C. Allen's treatment of Matthew, seems inadequate, one can have recourse to the oral hypothesis as developed under the hands of Mr. Arthur Wright in his article on the Gospel of Luke.

Perhaps one hesitates to face this apparent confusion and contradiction. But it is no more than an accurate reflection of the state of Christian thought and scholarship today. Is it always to be so hopelessly divided? Will the next great dictionary on these themes show no more marked progress toward unanimity? Certainly much relief would come should an editor demand of his contributors: (1) that the testimony of the writings of Paul on any theme be always treated separately from the testimony of the gospels; (2) that the thought of the Gospel of John on any subject should never be amalgamated with the ideas on that subject expressed in the Synoptic Gospels, but each set forth separately and with its own emphasis; (3) that quotations should not be permitted indiscriminately from the Synoptic Gospels, but should be taken from Mark in those passages where Matthew or Luke or both are dependent upon Mark; this one principle would lead to the complete rewriting of not a few contributions to this dictionary; (4) that the ultimate appeal should be in all cases to the results of a comparison of the documents or oral traditions underlying our present gospels, rather than to the finished form of the gospels. It is difficult to exaggerate the modifications that would be called for, and the implications of these modifications, in scores of articles in this dictionary, were such a method employed. In short, consistency would take the place of confusion, reasonable certainty would displace conjecture, violent opposition in opinions would find less of support in the records, if only those critical conclusions about the sources on which the great body of New Testament scholars are now agreed were uniformly employed in all efforts for a constructive statement of the thought of Jesus. Is it too much to expect this in the next dictionary of Christ and the gospels? And as a first attempt, might it not be well to be less ambitious, and make it a dictionary of the gospels and of the Jesus of the gospels? With such a delimitation of the task, and by the employment of reasonable and restrained critical processes, there would emerge, we believe, a character intelligible to the modern man, potent to awaken moral conviction, and calculated to secure absolute dominion wherever there is moral earnestness.

We repeat, what it is hardly necessary to say of any product from Dr. Hastings, that this is a splendidly conceived and executed work. One could mention numerous superb single articles. There are contributors who never fail to write with knowledge of the literature and with lucidity, who are open-minded and responsive, who really know what is going on, and are affected by movements that mean genuine progress. Such have a considerable part in the fashioning of important determinative portions of the volume.

HENRY BURTON SHARMAN

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